

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ACCRA 3427

LONDON FOR SEITZ

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINS, PINT, SHUM, GH
SUBJ: CONSTITUTIONAL COMMISSION, POLITICAL PRISONERS AND
OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

REF: (A) STATE 105144 (NOTAL) (B) ACCRA 3006 (C) ACCRA 2787(NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: HEAD OF STATE ACHEAMPONG HAS INVITED A
NUMBER OF OPPOSITION GROUPS TO SERVE ON COMMISSION
WHICH WILL DRAFT NEW CONSTITUTION FOR GHANA, BUT
THEY HAVE EITHER REMAINED SILENT OR HAVE REFUSED TO
PARTICIPATE. IN RELATED DEVELOPMENTS, GOG HAS
RELEASED NAMES OF 14 ADDITIONAL POLITICAL PRISONERS;
AN ACHEAMPONG-FOR-PRESIDENT TRIAL BALLOON IS STRUGGLING
TO GET OFF GROUND; AND A NEW "FINAL" VERSION OF
REFERENDUM RESULTS IS AVAILABLE. FORECAST IS FOR
CONTINUED CONFUSION AND DRIFT BY GOG IN THIS POST-
REFERENDUM PERIOD.
END SUMMARY.

2. LOCAL PRESS REPORTS THAT WHEN MEETING WITH BISHOP
OF AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH ON APRIL 23,
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HEAD OF STATE ACHEAMPONG ANNOUNCED HE HAD INVITED
GHANA'S CHRISTIAN COUNCIL, CATHOLIC SECRETARIAT,
BAR ASSOCIATION, INSTITUTE OF ENGINEERS, AND MUSLIM
COUNCIL TO SERVE ON CONSTITUTIONAL COMMISSION. UNDER
GOG'S TIMETABLE FOR RETURN TO CONSTITUTIONAL RULE,
THIS BODY SHOULD BE NAMED IN LAST WEEK OF APRIL
IN ORDER TO SUBMIT DRAFT CONSTITUTION BY END OF

OCTOBER 1978. WITH EXCEPTION OF MUSLIM COUNCIL, ALL THESE ORGANIZATIONS HAVE OPPOSED, DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY, ACHEAMPONG'S CONDUCT OF MARCH 30 REFERENDUM AND/OR HIS CONCEPT OF A "NON-PARTY" UNION GOVERNMENT. WE NOW UNDERSTAND THAT ONLY THE ENGINEERS RESPONDED TO ACHEAMPONG, AND THEY DECLINED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE COMMISSION; THE OTHER ORGANIZATIONS HAVE REMAINED SILENT, PROBABLY IN PROTEST AGAINST GOG'S ARREST OF AT LEAST 35 OPPOSITION LEADERS. UPSHOT IS THAT COMMISSION MAY NOT BE FORMED BY END OF APRIL OR THAT IT WILL CONTAIN ONLY PRO-UNION GOVERNMENT (I.E., PRO-ACHEAMPONG) MEMBERS.

3. THIS LATTER ALTERNATIVE IS CLEARLY FAVORED BY GOG-CONTROLLED GHANAIAI TIMES. IN APRIL 25 EDITORIAL, PAPER EXPRESSED ITSELF "AT A LOSS TO FIND ANY BASIS TO JUSTIFY THE GOVERNMENT'S INVITATION TO CERTAIN ORGANIZATIONS TO SEND REPRESENTATIVES TO SIT ON THE CONSTITUTIONAL COMMISSION SINCE SOME OF THESE ORGANIZATIONS--AS SUCH--HAVE ALREADY REJECTED THE CONCEPT (OF UNION GOVERNMENT)." EDITORIAL CONCLUDED IT WOULD BE MORE REASONABLE INSTEAD "TO APPOINT INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS OF SUCH ORGANIZATIONS WHO ACCEPT AND BELIEVE IN THE WORKABILITY OF THE CONCEPT TO SIT ON THE COMMISSION...BUT TO THROW THE DOOR OPEN TO THEM TO SEND THEIR OWN REPRESENTATIVES IS SUICIDAL." CONFIDENTIAL

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FOLLOWING UP IN APRIL 27 EDITORIAL, TIMES PRINTED LETTER TO EDITOR ARGUING THAT A "ONE OR TWO MAN COMMISSION SHOULD BE APPOINTED TO DRAFT THE CONSTITUTION FOR THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY...OTHERWISE, THE TIMETABLE FOR RETURN TO ANY OTHER RULE SHALL BE THROWN OVERBOARD."

4. IN RELATED DEVELOPMENTS, ON APRIL 25 GOG RELEASED TWO EXECUTIVE INSTRUMENTS (DATED APRIL 8 AND 11) LISTING 14 ADDITIONAL OPPOSITION LEADERS DETAINED

SINCE LATE MARCH/EARLY APRIL. THESE NAMES, ADDED TO THOSE OF 17 DETAINEES IDENTIFIED EARLIER (REF B), GIVE US IDENTITIES OF ONLY 31 OF THE 35 PRISONERS GOG ADMITS IT IS HOLDING. RUMORS HERE STILL ALLEGE THAT A FAIR NUMBER OF OTHER POLITICAL DETAINEES ARE ALSO BEING HELD UNDER GHANA'S PREVENTIVE CUSTODY LAWS. (SEPTTEL REPLIES TO REF A.)

5. THERE HAVE BEEN AT LEAST THREE ACHEAMPONG-FOR-PRESIDENT TRIAL BALLOONS LAUNCHED OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS. ALL WERE GREETED WITH OPEN OR SILENT DISMAY BY GHANAIAI CITIZENS AND EACH WAS QUICKLY ALLOWED TO

DIE. GOG-CONTROLLED DAILY GRAPHIC HAS NOW TRIED AGAIN, THIS TIME WITH AN APRIL 26 COLUMN WHICH CITES EISENHOWER, CHURCHILL AND DE GAULLE AS PROOF THAT SOLDIERS CAN INDEED MAKE GOOD STATESMEN. COLUMN DEMANDS, "WHY THEREFORE CANNOT (GENERAL ACHEAMPONG) BE ASKED TO BE THE FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE THIRD REPUBLIC?". IT CONCLUDES, "WHEN HE IS ELECTED PRESIDENT, THEN HE WILL ENSURE THE SUCCESS OF THE (UNION GOVERNMENT) EXPERIMENT...GENERAL ACHEAMPONG SHOULD BE THE NEXT PRESIDENT." WE ARE CONFIDENT

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THAT THIS TRIAL BALLOON WILL MEET THE SAME FATE AS ITS PREDECESSORS; VERY FEW GHANAIS APPEAR ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THE PROSPECT OF A NEW GOVERNMENT HEADED BY THE SAME MAN LARGELY RESPONSIBLE FOR DRIVING GHANA'S ECONOMY INTO THE GROUND.

6. A NEW "FINAL" VERSION OF REFERENDUM RESULTS IS NOW AVAILABLE. IN APRIL 21 ISSUE, GOG'S ORGAN OF RECORD, GHANA GAZETTE, CARRIED RESULTS (DATED APRIL 3 AND APPROVED BY ELECTORAL COMMISSIONER QUAYE) OF VOTING IN EACH OF COUNTRY'S 140 CONSTITUENCIES. AFTER DAILY GRAPHIC RAN INACCURATE TOTALS (DUE TO TYPOGRAPHICAL ERROR) IN ITS APRIL 25 EDITION, ON APRIL 26 GRAPHIC PRINTED WHAT IT SAID WAS "FINAL ANALYSIS", OR "SUMMARY RESULTS", OF REFERENDUM. PAPER MUST HAVE ADDED GAZETTE'S TOTALS FOR EACH CONSTITUENCY, SINCE GAZETTE GAVE ONLY NUMBERS OF "YES" AND "NO" VOTES, TOTAL VOTES CAST AND REGISTERED VOTERS IN EACH CONSTITUENCY. IN ANY CASE, APRIL 26 GRAPHIC ASSERTED THAT OUT OF 2,282,813 VOTES CAST, THE "YES" VOTE (IN

GAHOR OF UNION GOVERNMENT) WAS 1,372,427 AND THE "NO" VOTE 910,386. WE ARE POUCHING COPY OF GAZETTE TO AF/W SO THOSE HANDY WITH CALCULATORS CAN SEE IF DAILY GRAPHIC GOT ITS SUMS RIGHT THIS TIME. WE WILL NOW CONFIDENTIAL

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MERELY NOTE THAT THESE NEW RESULTS DIFFER SIGNIFICANTLY FROM WHAT EVERYBODY HAD UNDERSTOOD WERE OFFICIAL RESULTS AND WE HAD REPORTED AS SUCH IN REF C--I.E., THAT OF 1,983,678 VOTES CAST, 1,103,423 WERE "YES" ANEIWCIPNWWT "NO". (RESULTS REF C WERE TAKEN FROM ARPIL 6 DAILY GRAPHIC ARTICLE WHICH QUOTED ELECTORAL COMMISSIONER QUAYE AS OFFICIALLY PRESENTING THOSE RESULTS TO ACHEAMPONG ON APRIL 3.) AS ALSO REPORTED REF C, ANTI-ACHEAMPONG DISSIDENTS HAVE A THIRD SET OF FIGURES, WHICH ALLEGE THAT UNION GOVERNMENT WAS ACTUALLY DEFEATED IN REFERENDUM. OUR OVERALL IMPRESSION IS THAT CONTINUING UNCERTAINTIES OVER REFERENDUM SDATISTICS IS FURTHER EVIDENCE SUPPORTING CLAIM BY ACHEAMPONG'S OPPONENTS THAT REFERENDUM WAS MARRED BY IRREGULARITIES IN VOTE COUNTING. GOG'S LONG DELAY IN PRINTING RESULTS IN GAZETTE LENDS ADDITIONAL WEIGHT TO THIS SUSPICION, BUT WE CANNOT PROVE, OR DISPROVE, HYPOTHESIS THAT REFERENDUM WAS RIGGED--AS IS VERY WIDELY BELIEVED HERE.

7. COMMENT: MAIN THEME WHICH EMERGES FROM ABOVE POTPOURRI OF EVENTS IS ONE OF CONTINUED CONFUSION AND DRIFT BY GOG IN THIS POST-REFERENDUM PERIOD. IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT HARDLINERS WITHIN THE RULING SUPREME MILITARY COUNCIL (SMC) ARE TELLING ACHEAMPONG HE MADE A MISTAKE BY INVITING OPPONENTS TO JOIN CONSITUTIONAL COMMISSION; OPPONENTS HAVE TURNED DOWN OFFER AND HEAD OF STATE IS LEFT LOOKING INDECISIVE. IN ADDITION, RATS MAY BE LEAVING THE SHIP OF STATE--WE HAVE HEARD FROM GOOD SOURCE THAT ACHEAMPONG'S FIVE SPECIAL POLITICAL AIDES--DANSO, BOATENG, GHAPSON, KUMAH AND LAMPTEY, MOST OF THEM OFFICERS OF THE PEACE AND SOLIDARITY COUNCIL--HAVE ALL BEEN FIRED. ACHEAMPONG CONFIDENTIAL

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REPORTEDLY BLAMES THEM FOR FAILING TO TURN OUT A HEAVY "YES" VOTE IN REFERENDUM AND AT SAME TIME POCKETING A GOOD PART OF GENEROUS CAMPAIGN FUNDS THEY WERE GIVEN. WHILE ACHEAMPONG STILL APPEARS FIRMLY IN THE SADDLE, HIS GOVERNMENT'S WRIT IS

BEGINNING TO TATTER AND CRUMBLE AROUND THE EDGES.
(ONE GHANAIA DIPLOMAT, NOTING HIGH ABSENTEE RATE
AT MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS (MFA), SAID WE
ARE WITNESSING A "COLLAPSE OF AUTHORITY"--EVEN MFA
OFFICERS SPEND ONLY PART OF THE DAY AT THEIR DESKS
SINCE THEY HAVE TO DEVOTE A GREAT DEAL OF TIME TO
HUNTING FOR FOOD AND COMMODITIES IN LOCAL MARKETS.)
ON THE TECHNOLOGICAL FRONT, TELEPHONE SERVICE
IN ACCRA, ALWAYS ERRATIC, IS REACHING NEW LOWS; EVEN
THE CASTLE IS SAID TO FIND IT HARD TO GET AN OUTSIDE
LINE, AND WE ARE THINKING OF RECRUITING RUNNERS WITH
CLEFT STICKS TO PASS VITAL MESSAGES FOR EMBASSY.
ON BALANCE, WHILE WE THINK ACHEAMPONG WILL PROBABLY
SOMEHOW MUDDLE THROUGH THESE GROWING DIFFICULTIES,
PROSPECTS FOR GHANA OVER SHORT TERM AT LEAST STILL
APPEAR REMARKABLY BLEAK. SMITH

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